Anti-progressive verbs in the progressive:

Frequency changes across time and genres in American English

by

Lise Renate Tumert

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Supervisor: Johan Elsness

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1. Introduction

This thesis will examine a selection of English verbs, referred to by linguists as non-progressive or anti-progressive verbs. The investigation is corpus-based and will look at frequency variation across different genres and periods of English. A corpus is a collection of texts or parts of text upon which some general linguistic analysis can be conducted (Meyer 2002:xi). The texts of a corpus are of authentic origin and they are tagged and annotated for analytic purpose. A corpus investigation can be an effective methodology of examining linguistic data because of the enormous numbers of texts available and the relative simplicity of processing them. This study will explore genre differences and diachronic development of some anti-progressive verbs and also seek to contrast the use of the simple verb form against the progressive aspect. The investigation will look at the American variety of the English language exclusively.

1.1 The aim of the study

Certain verbs of inert perception, inert cognition, verbs of attitude and state verbs are normally not compatible with the progressive aspect (Leech 2004:25). This study will to some extent examine the validity of this claim by looking into some verbs falling into these categories and see if they appear in the progressive aspect at all. The search will examine cases where anti-progressive verbs appear in the progressive aspect and investigate if there is a difference or development of frequencies related to genres or time periods in which they appear.

1.2 The progressive aspect

The term the progressive aspect is used to describe the form of a verbal construction which starts with a form of *to be* and is followed by the *-ing* form of the next verb in the verb phrase, as in

She is making coffee right now.

The progressive meaning has been defined as the description of activities or events in progress at a particular time, usually for a limited period of time (Biber et al 2002:162). This form of the verb has also been called the continuous form which is a way of saying that this verb form describes an action in duration or in continuity. Biber says that the present progressive describes events that are currently in progress, or events that are going to take place in the future and about which the speaker feels quite certain.

Additionally Leech says that the present progressive gives an 'inside view' of a happening, rather than an 'outside view' (Leech 2004:18). The concept of duration related to the progressive aspect also shows why some verbs like *know, understand, hate* and *love* do not fit very well with the progressive aspect. If being asked if you know somebody, you will not respond, *Yes, I am knowing him*. You would say, *Yes, I know him*.

Comrie divides verbs into categories that can appear in the progressive form and those that cannot and relates this distinction to stative and nonstative verbs (Comrie 1976:35-37). He says that stative verbs do not have a progressive form. Moreover he says that in English it is not in general possible to use progressive forms of verbs of inert perception like *see* and *hear*, although he also argues that it is related to how active or dynamic the process of perception is. A more dynamic situation can open for the use of the progressive form. Comrie explains why the verb *understand* is usually a stative verb in most contexts by giving an example. If you answer positively that you comprehend, you would say, *Yes I understand*, not *Yes I am understanding*. However, it is possible to use a progressive form of the same verb in a situation when it is related to a change in the degree of understanding as in the next example. *I am understanding more about quantum mechanics as each day goes by.* Here the use of the progressive aspect of a stative verb refers to a developing process, not to a state[1].

1.3 Anti-progressive verb categories

Leech refers to four categories of verbs that hardly ever occur in the progressive form. They are verbs of inert perception, verbs of inert cognition, verbs of attitude and state verbs (Leech 2004:25-26). Inert perception is described by Leech as inactive sensing, a kind of sensing that takes place automatically without any active process going on. Verbs of this group are *feel, hear, see, smell* and *taste*. Verbs of inert cognition are verbs like *believe, forget, think, know* and *understand.* These are verbs of inert cognition according to Leech in the sense that they do not involve conscious effort or intention (Leech 2004:26). Verbs of attitude can be verbs like *hate, hope, like* and *love*. State verbs most often refer to the state of *having* or *being.* Verbs falling into this category are *be, belong, contain, cost, have* and *own*. His definition of verb groups will be applied further in this study.

[1] A comprehensive survey of the English progressive is given by Scheffer (1975).

1.4 Previous findings

The progressive aspect is a grammatical phenomenon that became more apparent in the seventeenth century. Marianne Hundt conducted an investigation that concluded that the rules of the use of the progressive emerged then and gradually the aspect of the progressive form became grammaticalized and increased in frequency. Her article 'Animacy, Agentivity, and the spread of the Progressive in Modern English' (2004) is a historical corpus investigation, where she saw the progressive aspect becoming more frequent in use. Originally the progressive would be found together with animate and agentive subjects in English. Her study, however, concluded that progressive verb forms would increasingly appear together with inanimate and non-agentive subjects[2].

Another investigation from 1995, 'Why is the progressive becoming more frequent in English?' looked into more recent trends of the progressive and was carried out by Hundt together with Christian Mair. They searched both American and British corpora and found that the progressive form has become more frequent over the past thirty years and that the progressive is most common in combination with the present tense. They did not see any radical grammatical innovation in the register of progressive forms and in their use. They suggest two explanations to account for this increase. One is to see this increase as a textlinguistic or a stylistic change. This means that the English language is undergoing a process of colloquialization where the written and spoken varieties are becoming more similar because speech habits are adopted into the written variety. The other explanation looks upon this increase as a grammatical phenomenon where in cases there is a choice between the simple and the progressive form, the progressive form is becoming more frequently used (Mair and Hundt 1995:118).

Also Nicholas Smith has studied the increase of the progressive in British English and he saw more specifically that it occurs increasingly with a contracted auxiliary verb and appears far more in main clauses than in subordinate clauses (Smith 2002:317-330). He suggests that this development is caused by a drift towards more colloquial speech habits and more subjective or interpretative uses of the language.

[2] See further Elsness (1994) about the progressive in early Modern English.

In this study, a limited number of verbs will be investigated. These verbs are special in the sense that they are all regarded as anti-progressive of nature. They are not supposed to occur in the progressive at all and because of that it will be interesting to explore if they appear in this form.

2 The verbs of the investigation

12 verbs were investigated, three of each category in accordance with Leech's grouping. The verbs of this investigation are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. The verbs of the investigation.

Verbs of inert perception	Verbs of inert cognition	Verbs of attitude	State verbs
FEEL	THINK	HOPE	DEPEND
HEAR	KNOW	INTEND	DESERVE
SEE	FORGET	PREFER	BELONG

2.1 Semantic spread and the reasons for choice of verbs

These verbs are chosen because they represent a pretty wide semantic spread. However, within the category of inert perception it is difficult to find verbs of very different meanings since they are all related to automatic sensing. For practical reasons the investigation is restricted to these 12 verbs. Within each category they represent a reasonable semantic spread.

3 The investigation

3.1 The corpora used for the investigation

The two corpora used for this investigation are The Corpus of Contemporary American English (the COCA) and The Time Magazine Corpus (the TMC). These are different corpora as they cover different genres and time periods although both of them contain American English only. They were chosen because of their difference as that gives a wider perspective on the investigation and because of easy access on the internet.

The Corpus of Contemporary American English is applied for investigating frequency across text categories (genres) and the contrast between the simple verb form and the progressive aspect. The Time Magazine Corpus is used for the diachronic investigation, to look into a possible change of magazine language from 1923 until today. Also here a contrast between the simple verb form and the progressive aspect is investigated.

3.1.1 The Corpus of Contemporary American English

The COCA is a relatively recent corpus, the earliest texts dating back to 1990. It is a freely-searchable 400+ million word[3] corpus of present-day American English. It is the largest corpus of American English currently existing and contains a wide collection of texts from different genres. New texts are added at least twice a year (20 million new words each year). The corpus is relatively evenly divided between five genres and the texts come from a variety of sources. The five genres are:

Spoken (83 million words): Transcripts of unscripted conversation from nearly 150 different TV and radio programs from e.g. ABC, CNN and PBS.

Fiction (79 million words): Short stories and plays from literary magazines, children's magazines, popular magazines, first chapters of first edition books 1990-present and movie scripts.

Magazines (84 million words): Nearly 100 different magazines, with a good mix between specific domains (news, health, home and gardening, women, financial, religion and sports) from e.g. *Newsweek, Forbes* and *Mother Jones.*

Newspapers (79 million words): Ten newspapers from across the US, with a good mix between different sections of the newspapers, such as local news, opinion, sports, finance from e.g. *the New York Times, USA Today* and *the Washington Post.*

Academic Journals (79 million words): Nearly 100 different peer-reviewed journals. These were selected to cover the entire range of the Library of Congress classification system.

[3] This is the size of the COCA in 2010. This study is based on data retrieved in 2009 and a slightly smaller number of words is used for calculating frequency per million words within each genre.

In the COCA it is possible to search for lemmas, words, phrases, alternates, substrings, parts of speech, synonyms and more. The corpus is tagged by CLAWS, the same tagging that is used for the BNC (the British National Corpus) and the TMC.

A tagset is a group of symbols representing various parts of speech which is used to annotate a corpus. Listing provides for total frequency of all matching forms of a search word or a search string. To investigate a search string in more detail it is possible to study words in expanded context.

Information about genre, year and the actual source of the match is also given. Chart listing will provide for total distribution of all matching forms within each genre or time period. Both raw frequency of occurrences and frequency per million words are given. The time periods are divided into sections of five years 1990-94, 1995-99, 2000-2004 and 2005-2009.

3.1.2 The Time Magazine Corpus

The Time Magazine Corpus is a 100 million word corpus of American English. It is regarded as the largest structured corpus of historical American English. This corpus is also internet-based and the website provides for searches in texts of American English from 1923 to the present day, as found in *Time Magazine*. The most interesting feature of this corpus is the possibility to compare language across time. It is possible to see how words and phrases have increased and decreased in frequency and to see how words have changed meaning over time. Language is sectioned in decades from the 1920s to the 2000s. However, the first and last decades do not comprise a full ten-year span.

This corpus consists of only one genre, namely magazine language taken from articles in *Time Magazine*. When looking into examples in context, the corpus can provide for information about year and date of the article where the sample occurs, though nothing more specific is annotated about subgenres or classification of magazine language.

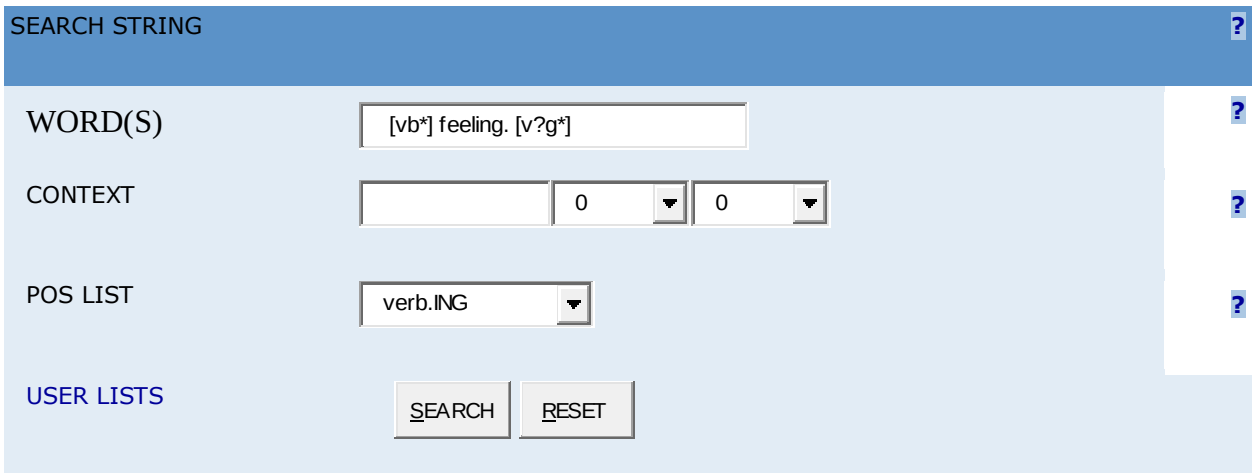
3.2 The search procedure in the COCA

In this study a specific search string is entered to make sure that the corpus would provide for the accurate occurrences of a specific word. The search string is:

[vb*] the -*ing* form of the verb.[v?g*]

Table 2 is from the opening page of the COCA and shows the search string of FEEL.

Table 2. Entering the search string of FEEL in the COCA.



Only verbal constructions where the *–ing* form follows immediately after the form of *to be* is investigated. This excludes some progressives where an adverbial occurs between the form of *to be* and the *–ing* form, as in this example, *He was **always** thinking about the project*. This is a limitation that reduces the number of occurrences of the study, however it is doubtful that it will affect the results considerably as it is assumed that these adverbial constructions are relatively evenly distributed in the corpus.

Table 3 on the next page is a complete review of the first search where all the alternatives of *to be* preceding FEEL as a progressive are listed, starting with the most frequent auxiliary combination. Both full and contracted forms are listed. In this case there are 14 combinations, *was feeling* is the most frequent with 1 716 occurrences and there are altogether 6 327 occurrences of FEEL as a progressive.

The last 4 slots (11 – 14) show some strange occurrences of *feeling*. They come up probably due to spelling mistakes or incorrect tagging when text is entered in the corpus. The number of these oddities is very low and such occurrences are excluded from this investigation. To extract more information it is possible to click on e.g. *was feeling*. Then the corpus shows the first 100 occurrences of *was feeling* in context and also provides detailed information about date, genre and origin of each occurrence.

Table 3. All occurrences of to be + *-ing* form of FEEL and auxiliary combinations in the COCA.

1	□	WAS FEELING	1 716
2	□	'RE FEELING	941
3	□	ARE FEELING	786
4	□	'M FEELING	760
5	□	IS FEELING	579
6	□	'S FEELING	408
7	□	BE FEELING	382
8	□	BEEN FEELING	343
9	□	WERE FEELING	302
10	□	AM FEELING	106
11	□	S FEELING	1
12	□	REMEMBER--VIVEDLY -- IS FEELING	1
13	□	MYSELF FEELING	1
14	□	KIDS FEELING	1
		TOTAL	6 327

The search procedure called LIST is shown in Table 3. This search is done for all the verbs of the study. In addition to the listing of raw frequency of the *–ing* forms following a *to be* construction and showing samples in context, the corpus provides another useful search called CHART.

This other search alternative called CHART (Table 4) gives more detailed information about distribution across genres and time in the COCA. The distribution specifies both raw frequency and frequency per million words. The latter is the basis of the quantitative investigation of this study as frequency per million words makes the occurrences comparable both within a corpus and between different corpora. These distributions of frequencies across genres are of indispensable value for this investigation. The distribution across time periods will not be explored in the COCA. The TMC is applied for the study of frequency change across time.

Table 4. Distribution of FEEL as a progressive across genres and time in the COCA.

SECTION	SPOKEN	FICTION	MAGAZINE	NEWSPAPER	ACADEMIC	1990-1994	1995-1999	2000-2004	2005-2008
SEE ALL SECTIONS									
PER MIL	**22.7**	**28.0**	**15.9**	**11.9**	**3.4**	**14.8**	**15.0**	**17.8**	**18.4**
SIZE (MW)[4]	78.8	74.9	80.7	76.3	76.2	103.4	103.0	102.6	77.9
FREQ	1791	2093	1281	905	257	1526	1541	1824	1436

Table 4 was generated from the COCA in February 2009. The size per million words of each genre given here is what is applied for tables and calculations when the COCA is investigated. The size of each genre is somewhat smaller than what is noted on p.9 which is from 2010.

All the verbs of the investigation are put through the search procedure both in LIST and CHART to gather necessary information about the frequency and the distribution across genres.

[4] This column shows the size of each genre in million words applied in the study.

4 Findings in the COCA

4.1 Limitations and restrictions

All the data of this investigation was collected in February 2009. In order to narrow down the search and look at language in detail a random sample of occurrences was studied. Table 5 shows all the occurrences of possible progressives of the verbs and is the starting point of the investigation.

Table 5. Occurrences of all possible progressives across genres (raw frequency) in the COCA.

		Distribution across genres in the COCA					
Category	Verb	Spoken	Fiction	Magazine	News	Academic	Total
Verbs of inert perception	FEEL	1 791	2 092	1 279	905	257	6 324
	HEAR	2 952	665	346	359	136	4 458
	SEE	5 249	1 646	1 211	1 554	361	10 021
Verbs of inert cognition	THINK	4 621	6 695	2 078	1 896	555	15 845
	KNOW	93	110	146	83	69	501
	FORGET	90	121	47	48	11	317
Verbs of attitude	HOPE	2 539	1 211	759	1 459	151	6 119
	INTEND	56	43	10	16	10	135
	PREFER	0	1	1	1	0	3
State verbs	DEPEND	13	3	1	6	5	28
	DESERVE	0	0	0	0	1	1
	BELONG	5	2	1	2	3	13

All the occurrences of recorded forms generated by the corpus are initially referred to as possible progressives when they appear as raw frequencies. Later a random sample is analysed and post edited as genuine progressives or non-genuine progressives. Non-genuine progressives are excluded from the investigation.

The corpus lists all auxiliaries in full and contracted form as shown in Table 3 on p. 11. From Table 3 the present progressive forms are extracted. These are combinations with *am, 'm, are, 're, is, 's* . The past progressive are the forms with *was* and *were* in front of the progressive. These 8 combinations of auxiliaries are investigated for all 12 verbs. *Be* and *been* in front of the progressive are not investigated. This is done to limit the study.

4.2 Genuine and non-genuine progressives

In this investigation a limited number of possible progressives in context is manually checked to see if they are genuine progressives. A random sample of one hundred occurrences is printed out, read in detail, determined as a genuine progressive or not and finally classified according to genre. Altogether one hundred progressives of each combination of an auxiliary are checked, in total 800 occurrences for each verb of the investigation.

The aim of this procedure is first of all to secure that the progressives which are to be investigated further are genuine progressives, secondly to arrange the occurrences according to genres. Some of the verbs had less than a hundred occurrences and then all the instances generated by the corpus were analysed. This applied to all the progressives in category 3 and 4 except for HOPE. When this is done the genuine progressives can be subjected to a further study of difference across genres and auxiliary combinations.

One difficulty occurred related to comparing frequency across genres. To do this properly it is correct to calculate frequency according to the number of words of each genre. Since only a limited material was investigated this was not possible. For each verb a percentage of genuine progressiveness will appear and even though this applies only to a random sample, this specific percentage will be applied to all the possible progressives generated by the corpus. This percentage will be used to calculate the frequency of genuine progressives per million words within each genre. A description of this procedure will follow the verb FEEL.

Table 6. A random sample of FEEL checked for genuine progressiveness across genres in the COCA.

FEEL	All occurr-rences	Random sample	Non-genuine progr	Genuine progres-sives	Distribution of genuine progressives across genres in the COCA				
					Spoken	Fiction	Mag	News	Aca
am	106	100	0	100	20	44	18	10	8
'm	760	100	0	100	41	39	12	8	0
are	786	100	0	100	40	6	25	23	6
're	941	100	0	100	42	13	32	11	2
is	579	100	3	97	25	13	16	35	8
's	363	100	11	89	23	30	13	20	3
was	1 716	100	0	100	12	65	14	6	3
were	302	100	0	100	32	21	27	13	7
	5 553	800	14	786	235	231	157	126	37

From Table 6 a high percentage of agreement between possible and genuine progressives can be observed. Two auxiliary combinations have occurrences where the *–ing* form of FEEL is not a genuine progressive. This applies to combinations of ***is feeling*** and ***'s feeling***. The first combination has 3 non-genuine progressive cases; the latter has 11 cases. These 14 occurrences out of a sample of 800 account for 1.75%[5], implying that 98.25% of the occurrences are genuine progressives. When a progressive is not genuine it is most often a noun phrase of a genitive construction, an adjectival phrase or a subject predicative. Here are two examples of non-genuine progressives of FEEL generated from the COCA.

1996	News	He has a purist'**s feeling** for the right word and the correct syntax, and a good newspaperman's discriminating eye.
2007	Magazine	I wanted to teach holistic health which **is feeling** good from the inside out.

In the first example *'s feeling* is a noun phrase of a genitive construction. In the next example *is feeling* is a subject predicative which can be replaced by an infinitive clause. This sentence can be rephrased like this. *I wanted to teach holistic health which is **to feel** good from the inside out.* Examples like these are excluded as irrelevant cases. Below are some examples of FEEL as a genuine progressive.

1998	News	All these people **were feeling** the same threat.
1999	Fiction	Maybe we call her when we get home, to see how she'**s feeling**.
2008	Spoken	Barack Obama **is feeling** the heat.

After the manual check for genuine progressiveness of all occurrences of the random sample, a complete table is made which shows findings of genuine progressives for all the verbs of the investigation. The occurrences of non-genuine and genuine progressives can be studied for all the verbs in Table 7.

[5] 14/800*100% = 1.75%

Table 7. Findings of genuine progressivesof a random sample, across genres in the COCA.

	Random sample	Non-genuine progr	Genuine progr	Distribution of genuine progressives across genres in the COCA				
				Spoken	Fiction	Mag	News	Aca
FEEL	800	14	786	235	231	157	126	37
HEAR	769	35	734	428	132	73	67	34
SEE	764	43	721	281	183	102	120	35
THINK	800	14	786	241	286	124	91	44
KNOW	263	238	25	9	7	5	2	2
FORGET	283	21	262	79	104	33	38	8
HOPE	800	25	775	333	130	100	185	27
INTEND	109	3	106	45	28	9	16	8
PREFER	3	0	3	0	1	1	1	0
DEPEND	23	0	23	10	3	1	5	4
DESERVE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BELONG	12	5	7	5	1	1	0	0

The overall picture does not reveal too many discrepancies, however some verbs have a number of non-genuine progressives, and this applies in particular to KNOW, SEE and HEAR. The same pattern as for FEEL is recognised in all the constructions of **is + *-ing* form** and ***'s* + *-ing* form**. Most of the non-genuine occurrences appear with these auxiliary combinations. These non-genuine progressives are in most cases a noun phrase of a genitive construction. Some verbs have many occurrences of non-genuine progressives in a construction of a subject predicative. This is in particular apparent for the verb KNOW. The verb has 263 possible progressives, 238 occurrences of non-genuine progressives and only 25 instances are classified as genuine progressives. KNOW will be commented on further on p. 22. The percentages of genuine progressiveness are calculated for all the verbs in the same way as for FEEL.

Table 8. Percentages of genuine progressiveness of the random samples in the COCA.

FEEL	HEAR	SEE	THINK	KNOW	FORGET	HOPE	INTEND	PREFER	DEPEND	DESERVE	BELONG
98%	95%	94%	98%	9.5%	93%	97%	97%	100%	100%	0	58%

KNOW as a genuine progressive is the verb that stands out. Only 9.5% of the random samples of KNOW are classified as genuine progressives. The other progressives in Table 8 show a relatively high percentage of genuine progressiveness.

4.3 Genuine progressives across genres

The genuine progressives found in the random sample are now ready to be analysed across genres. Although they represent a small part of the corpus they reflect on a tendency of the entire corpus. From the findings in Table 7 it is now possible to calculate occurrences of genuine progressives per million words within each genre. All the occurrences of the possible progressives are calculated according to the percentage of genuine progressiveness.

The basis for this calculation is the raw frequency of the possible progressives in Table 5, the percentages of genuine progressives in Table 8 and the size of each genre in 2009. The sizes of the different genres in million words in 2009 were 78.8 (spoken), 74.9 (fiction), 80.7 (magazine), 76.3 (news) and 76.2 (academic). It is assumed that the occurrences of genuine progressives are distributed evenly across genres. The distribution per million words of the verbs can be seen in Table 9.

Table 9. Genuine progressives across genres, per million words in the COCA.

	Distribution of genuine progressives across genres, per million words in the COCA				
	Spoken	Fiction	Magazine	News	Academic
FEEL	22	27	16	12	3
HEAR	36	8	4	5	2
SEE	63	21	14	19	4
THINK	57	88	25	24	7
KNOW	0	0	0	0	0
FORGET	1	1	1	1	0
HOPE	31	16	9	19	2
INTEND	1	1	0	0	0
PREFER	0	0	0	0	0
DEPEND	0	0	0	0	0
DESERVE	0	0	0	0	0
BELONG	0	0	0	0	0

Table 9 shows that the genuine progressives of these verbs are most frequent in the spoken language where SEE, THINK, HEAR and HOPE have a frequency of 63, 57, 36, and 31 per million words respectively. Fiction also has a number of genuine progressives, THINK, FEEL and SEE have hits of 88, 27 and 21 per million words respectively of that genre. For the next three genres magazine, news and academic, the occurrences are fewer. Magazine language has 25 genuine progressives of THINK, 16 of FEEL and 14 of SEE per million words. News has 24 progressives of THINK, 19 of SEE and 19 of HOPE per million words.

The academic genre stands out with very few occurrences of genuine progressives; THINK is the most frequent progressive of that genre with 7 occurrences per million words. For category 3 and 4 the only verb with any significant occurrence is HOPE. HOPE has 31 occurrences of progressives in spoken language, 19 in news and 16 in fiction; all occurrences are per million words. INTEND has 1 instance in spoken and 1 in fiction. PREFER, DEPEND, OBSERVE and BELONG have no occurrences of progressives per million words.

The frequency of the most common progressives across genres of spoken and fiction can be studied in Figure 1.

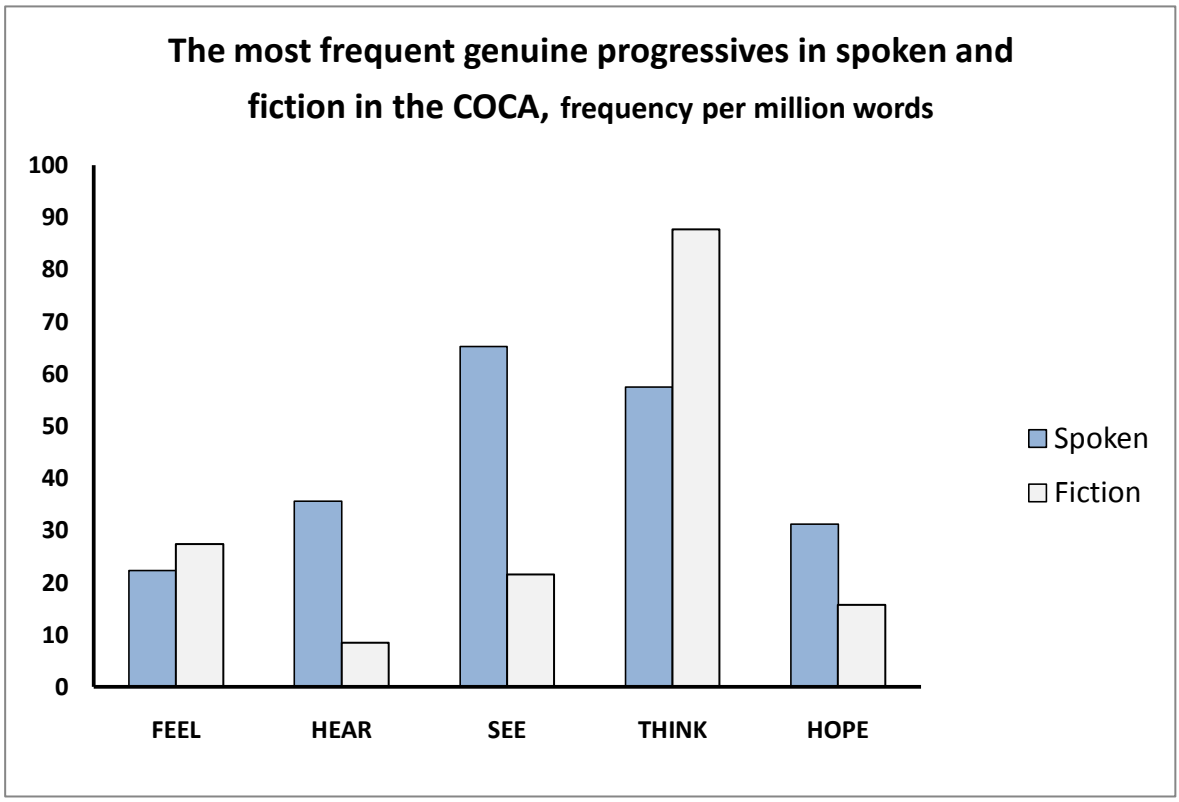


Figure 1. The most frequent genuine progressives in spoken and fiction in the COCA.

Figure 1 shows the occurrences of progressives of FEEL, HEAR, SEE, THINK and HOPE. They are the most frequent progressives and they are contrasted across the genres of spoken and fiction. These two genres have most occurrences of genuine progressives in the COCA.

The genuine progressives of HEAR, SEE and HOPE have a frequency which is higher in spoken language than in fiction. The genuine progressives of THINK and FEEL have a higher frequency in fiction. THINK as a genuine progressive stands out as the progressive with highest frequency across all genres. The frequencies of genuine progressives of THINK are illustrated in Figure 2.

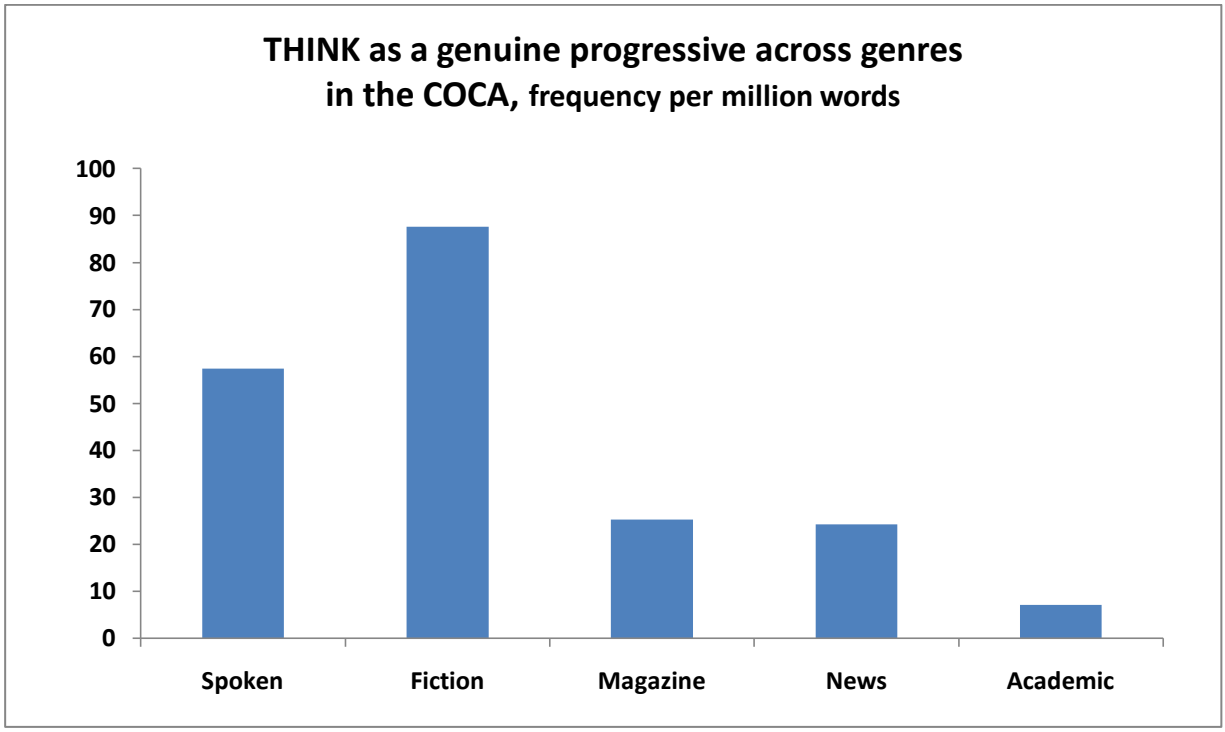


Figure 2. THINK as a genuine progressive across genres in the COCA.

THINK as a genuine progressive is most frequent in fiction and least frequent in academic language. It has a frequency of 88 occurrences per million in fiction and 57 in spoken and a relatively low frequency in magazine and news language, whereas in academic the frequency is really low, only 7 occurrences per million words.

This investigation of anti-progressive verbs in the COCA reveals that they actually occur in the progressive form and that they are most frequently used in the genres of spoken and fiction. There is an apparent difference between the five verbs that have occurrences of genuine progressives and those that hardly have any occurrences at all.

The verbs that have occurrences of progressives are THINK, HOPE, SEE, HEAR and FEEL. The other verbs have very low or no frequency at all in the progressive.

To put some perspective of what a frequency of 88 or 57occurrences per million words signifies, another small investigation is done where verbs that more usually occur with the progressive are checked for frequency per million words. Leech says that *activity verbs* and *process verbs* easily go with the progressive form (Leech 2004:24). The verbs of this minor study are RUN, WORK, and PLAY (activity verbs) and CHANGE, GROW and LEARN (process verbs). They are randomly chosen from Leech's listing on p.24. The same search string as earlier is used (See p.9). Note that these verbs have not been checked for genuine progressiveness. The findings can be studied in Table 10.

Table 10. Frequency per million words of activity and process verbs in the progressive form across genres in the COCA.

COCA	Spoken	Fiction	Mag	News	Aca
RUN	68	40	28	36	6
WORK	124	67	69	80	33
PLAY	46	37	26	41	7
CHANGE	17	6	11	14	8
GROW	22	17	24	26	11
LEARN	13	6	11	11	10

The frequencies of these verbs in the progressive form differ from 6 to 124 occurrences per million words. The same tendency which was discovered for the so-called anti-progressive verbs can be observed here as well, that the use of progressives is most common in spoken and fiction. There are some occurrences in magazine and news language; however, a notably low frequency in the academic genre. The fact that genuine progressives of THINK, SEE and HOPE have a frequency of 31 to 88 per million words indicates that they are almost as frequent in the progressive as the activity verbs in Table 10 and they are more frequent the process verbs in Table 10.

4.4 Comments on special cases

4.4.1 Comments on THINK as a genuine progressive

THINK is the most frequent genuine progressive of all the verbs of the investigation. Across genres it has this distribution per million words.

Table 11. Occurrences of THINK as a genuine progressive across genres in the COCA.

Spoken	Fiction	Magazine	News	Academic
57	88	25	24	7

When analysing the random sample of THINK as a possible progressive, it was observed that *thinking* very often occurred together with the prepositions *about* and *of*. *Thinking about/of* describes a mental process of considering something or having a set of ideas which are being contemplated in the mind. This progressive often describes mental activities and processes that take time. *Thinking about/of* can also imply a plan of doing something in the future. The progressive *thinking* does not have the same meaning as THINK in the simple verb form, which often means to have or be of a certain opinion**.**

Leech refers to THINK as being anti-progressive when it does not involve any conscious effort or intention, then the simple present will be preferred since it refers to a state (Leech 2004:29). He comments on this further when he says that there is a reference to an activation or arousal of a thought process when the progressive of the verb is appropriate. He mentions examples where *thinking* is felt to be a kind of work or mental effort, equivalent to *considering* or *ruminating*. This is precisely what can be observed from the random samples of this study. Whenever there is a genuine progressive there is a reference to processes or activities which are deliberate. Here are some examples of genuine present progressives found in the random sample. The random sample also shows usage of *thinking* with a future reference

1991	Fiction	He **is thinking** of becoming a lay analyst. He is c*onsidering* an occupation as a lay analyst, this would usually also imply a future reference.

1991	Fiction	I want to know what **he's thinking** about. *He's thinking* is a reference to a deliberate process of the mind that takes some time.
1995	Magazine	So John **is thinking** about selling it and figures it might fetch $30,000 today. John is *considering* or *planning* to sell something.
2005	News	And there is an opportunity to come to America, and I **am thinking** about it, definitely. This person *is considering* to go to America in the future.

-*Ing* forms of THINK have few examples of non-genuine progressives. However, there are some. Here is one example, *Latinos **are thinking** people* (News, 2008). *Thinking* is here an adjectival phrase and such examples were excluded from the count of genuine progressives of this investigation.

4.4.2 Comments on KNOW as a genuine progressive

KNOW has many possible progressives which are not categorised as genuine progressives when they are analysed. Table 12 shows the findings of KNOW when a random sample is checked for progressiveness. The different auxiliary combinations and their frequencies can be observed in table 12.

Table 12. Non-genuine and genuine progressives of KNOW across genres in the COCA.

KNOW	ALL occurences	Random sample	Non-progr	Genuine progr	Genuine progressives across genres in the COCA				
					Spoken	Fiction	Mag	News	Aca
am	4	4	0	4	0	3	1	0	0
'm	2	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0
are	9	9	6	3	0	0	0	1	2
're	4	4	0	4	2	1	1	0	0
is	288	100	99	1	0	0	1	0	0
's	67	67	61	6	3	1	2	0	0
was	73	73	69	4	1	2	0	1	0
were	4	4	3	1	1	0	0	0	0
	451	263	238	25	9	7	5	2	2

Table 12 shows that only a few occurrences of KNOW are categorized as genuine progressives, altogether there are 25. KNOW as a progressive has very few occurrences especially in construction with *am, 'm, are*, *'re* and *were*. For the combination of *is knowing* and *was knowing* there are some occurrences, however many of them are not genuine progressives. Spoken and fiction have most occurrences of genuine progressives of KNOW.

KNOW as a 'dubious 'genuine progressive can be seen in this example.

2005	Magazine	"I **am knowing** English just as much as you," he said, wishing it were true.

This example from the COCA appears to be a genuine progressive. The occurrence is checked in expanded context to see its original source. It is a text from *Boys Life,* an American magazine. In expanded context the text is like this**:**

> *Philippe knew what he wanted to say, but as much as he tried to hide it, sometimes his English wasn't too great. If he could have spoken in French, he could have said exactly what he meant; in English, he was left with his mouth hanging open in wordless silence. Finally, Mr. Harding just walked away. Philippe turned back toward Leo."I* ***am knowing*** *English just as much as you," he said, wishing it were true. "Prove it," Leo said. Philippe frowned.*

The expanded context reveals that the speaker is a foreigner, he is French. This might explain the unusual and doubtful usage of KNOW as a progressive. The text itself refers to a Frenchman with an imperfect knowledge of English. He is probably using the progressive form of KNOW in this context because he is influenced by his mother tongue. French aspect and verb forms differ from English[6]. The general rule of English is that KNOW does not allow for the formation of a progressive, even with reference to a contingent state (Comrie 1976:38). Noticeably the spell check of Word automatically marks this expression as incorrect and suggests it changed into **I know**. Nevertheless the corpus has a few examples of such doubtful usage of KNOW as a progressive.

There are many occurrences where *knowing* is not a genuine progressive. Most of these non-genuine progressives are then a subject predicative, as in this example *It is knowing how to win* (News, 1992). The next example is the only example of *is knowing* that is categorized as a genuine progressive.

[6] See Comrie for more about aspect in different languages, pp.1-7.

1998	Magazine	Everyone **is knowing** that.

The combination of *was knowing* shows the same pattern. The corpus generates 73 occurrences and only 4 are categorized as genuine progressives.

1990	News	I wish I **was knowing** euphoria and seeing haughty vignettes of my candidate's victory party.
1991	Fiction	It was hard to tell when he was simply looking and when he **was knowing** as well.
1994	Spoken	He **was knowing** of what was going on.
1998	Fiction	He **was knowing**, but he was humble too.

The last examples may even be doubtful as they can be interpreted as *he knew* or *he had the knowledge*. Nonetheless, these 4 examples were classified as genuine progressives in the study.

Although KNOW is in the same category as THINK (category 2, verbs of inert cognition) it is a different mental process going on when the two verbs are compared. *Thinkin*g is describing a process that takes time, but KNOW denotes a mental state rather than a process. Either *one knows* or *one does not know*, a process or a development do not go well with this verb and this may be the reason why it is not used much in the progressive.

4.4.3 Comments on HOPE as a genuine progressive

HOPE as a progressive has occurrences in all genres in the COCA, both raw frequency (See Table 5) and frequency per million words (See Table 9). The corpus generates 6 119 occurrences of possible progressives. The number of genuine progressives is reduced slightly after the analysis of the random sample. Genuine progressiveness of HOPE is 97%. One phrase is noticeable in the random sample. Among the hundred cases of the auxiliary combination of '*s hoping* there are 24 occurrences of *Here's hoping*.

Here's hoping is not regarded as a genuine progressive with a progressive meaning as it is more like an expression and can be interpreted as *Let us hope* or *There is a hope of*. This expression appears in all genres except academic.

Table 13 shows the findings of HOPE with the different auxiliary combinations when a random sample is checked for progressiveness. The total number of occurrences does not match the number given in Table 5 because *be* and *been* are not investigated.

Table 13. Non-genuine and genuine progressives of HOPE across genres in the COCA.

HOPE	ALL occurences	Random sample	Non-progr	Genuine progr	Genuine progressives across genres in the COCA				
					Spoken	Fiction	Mag	News	Aca
am	116	100	0	100	33	23	15	22	7
'm	891	100	0	100	52	16	11	20	1
are	873	100	0	100	48	1	10	36	5
're	758	100	0	100	66	6	11	15	2
is	795	100	1	99	38	4	14	38	5
's	387	100	24	76	33	11	11	20	1
was	1 376	100	0	100	24	46	10	16	4
were	476	100	0	100	39	23	18	18	2
	5 672	800	25	775	333	130	100	185	27

Most of the occurrences of possible progressives of HOPE are genuine progressives. Those that are not are combinations of the expression *Here is hoping* or *Here's hoping.* The genre of spoken has the highest frequency of genuine progressives of HOPE.

Leech comments on HOPE and says that progressives of HOPE are often cases of special polite usage (Leech 2004:30). He says that in idiomatic colloquial speech, this usage is often preferred to the regular simple present. He suggests that *I am hoping* is more polite and conveys a more tentative approach than *I hope.* He further points out that the past progressive is even more tentative and also more demanding for the listener. The listener could even be put at some risk or inconvenience by being approached with a past progressive of HOPE. *I was hoping you could help me with my flat tire,* has a tentative, but also a somewhat demanding approach. Table 13 shows that the auxiliary combination *was hoping* is by far the most frequent with 1 376 occurrences. Here are some examples of HOPE as a genuine progressive in the COCA.

1996	Spoken	Hillary Clinton tells *Time Magazine* that she and the President **are hoping** to have another child, or to adopt one. This use of HOPE as a genuine progressive expresses both tentativeness and a future reference.

2003	Fiction	I **was hoping**, if you can forgive me, I **was hoping** we could be friends again. This progressive use of HOPE reflects both tentativeness and politeness.
2003	Fiction, Da Vinci Code	I **was hoping** you would be kind enough to explain to Ms. Neveu the true nature of the Holy Grail. The use of *was hoping* together with the modal *would* underlines that this is a polite request.

4.4.4 Comments on genuine progressives of low frequency

Some verbs of the investigation have very few occurrences, both in raw frequency and frequency per million words. This applies to verbs of category 3 and 4. However, among the few progressives retrieved in these categories, most of them were genuine progressives. Table 7 on p.16 gives information of genuine progressiveness and the distribution across genres for these verbs.

106 cases out of 109 possible progressives of INTEND are classified as genuine progressives. *Intending* as a genuine progressive usually means *to plan* or *have a particular purpose in mind.*

2006	News	If you **are intending** to build a profile online, a website online won't cut it.

All 23 occurrences of DEPEND are analysed as genuine progressives, 10 of them are in spoken language.

2006	Spoken	It'**s depending** upon how successful the last strike was.

BELONG has only a few occurrences in the COCA. 7 out of 12 cases are categorized as genuine progressives. Here is one example of BELONG as a past genuine progressive.

1995	Spoken	The lands always **were belonging** to the federal government.

PREFER has 3 occurrences of progressives, all categorized as genuine and DESERVE has no occurrences of progressives. Categories 3 and 4, except HOPE have altogether a very low frequency of progressives in the COCA.

4.5 Contrasting the progressive aspect and the simple verb form

After having studied the genuine progressives of the 12 verbs in the COCA, it is interesting to compare them to the raw frequencies of the same 12 verbs in the simple verb form. The simple present of these verbs can be retrieved from the corpus by entering the **search string [vvo]** which is the base form of the verb in the present tense. The **search string [vvz]** is entered to find all occurrences of the simple present of third person singular. Occurrences of these frequencies together account for the total frequency of the simple present tense.

For the past tense a similar search is done, with the **search string [vvd**]. The total frequencies of the present progressives are found by adding all genuine progressives of the auxiliary combinations of *am, 'm, are, 're, is*, and *'s* of each of the 12 verbs. The total frequencies of the past progressives are found by adding all genuine progressives of auxiliary combinations of *was,* and *were.* Now the frequencies of the simple present and the simple past are contrasted against genuine frequencies of the present progressive and the past progressive. Through this investigation the ratio of the progressive to the simple verb form can be studied.

A low ratio indicates that the progressive is infrequent compared to the simple form; whereas a larger number of the ratio shows a more frequent usage of the progressive. A hundred per cent ratio would indicate that the progressive is used just as much as the simple verb form.

Table 14 shows the ratio between the verb forms of all the 12 verbs of the study. The table shows both the total frequencies and the ratios. The table reveals that the simple verb form both for the present and the past is proportionately much more frequent than the progressive verb form.
The progressive form has a very low ratio for most verbs, a percentage of 4% or lower. This gives a notion that these anti-progressive verbs are not frequent in the progressive at all.
For the verbs of categories 3 and 4, the ratio is very low or next to nothing, except for HOPE. HEAR, HOPE and THINK have a slightly higher ratio than 4%.

Table 14. Contrasting the frequency of the simple verb form and the progressive aspect, present and past in the COCA. Frequencies of progressives are genuine for both present and past progressives.

	Frequency of of the simple present	Frequency of present progressives	Ratio	Frequency of the simple past	Frequency of past progressive	Ratio
FEEL	86 708	3 518	4%	83 627	2 018	2%
HEAR	29 883	2 343	8%	44 805	630	1%
SEE	185 406	6 622	4%	105 542	1 441	1%
THINK	396 003	7 112	2%	119 428	5 732	5%
KNOW	421 821	22	0%	116 019	4	0%
FORGET	10 786	221	2%	5 845	42	1%
HOPE	43 430	3 819	9%	8 045	1 852	23%
INTEND	5 099	56	1%	5 540	51	1%
PREFER	9 992	3	0%	3 258	0	0%
DEPEND	116 417	18	0%	871	5	1%
DESERVE	9 504	0	0%	2 480	0	0%
BELONG	9 063	0	0%	4 721	4	0%

HOPE stands out as the progressive of some frequency. HOPE as a past progressive has a ratio of 23% and as a present progressive a ratio of 9%. HEAR has a ratio of 8% for the present progressives and only 1% for the past progressives. THINK has a ratio of 2% of the present progressives and 5% for the past progressives.

5 Findings in the TMC

5.1 Limitations and restrictions

The Time Magazine Corpus has a very similar opening page to that of the COCA. The striking difference is the time span, sectioned in decades, which in the TMC covers a period from 1923, when *Time Magazine* was first published and up to the present day. A diachronic study may be done in the TMC by studying frequency changes across time. The frequencies and the samples used in this study were retrieved in February and March 2010. Possible and genuine progressiveness of the same 12 verbs are investigated across decades. For the first verb FEEL, the search string is the same as in the COCA, **[vb*] feeling.[v?g*]**. The corpus lists all the occurrences of *feeling* with different forms of auxiliaries both with full and contracted forms. Their distribution across decades can be studied in Table 15.

The TMC is a smaller corpus and hence the raw frequencies of the same verbs are lower. When FEEL is entered, there are only 716 occurrences compared to 6 327 in the COCA. Table 15 gives a full overview of the recorded occurrences of possible progressives in the TMC.

Table 15. Occurrences of possible progressives across time in the TMC.

	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total
FEEL	25	52	115	102	101	55	67	109	90	716
HEAR	12	29	44	29	38	44	37	57	49	339
SEE	7	32	70	55	57	66	99	122	108	616
THINK	56	119	230	197	153	141	118	233	171	1 418
KNOW	1	3	2	1	4	6	8	9	9	43
FORGET	1	2	4	9	3	4	7	6	4	40
HOPE	14	29	51	75	62	92	103	160	120	706
INTEND	3	0	1	4	0	0	2	1	1	12
PREFER	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
DEPEND	1	0	4	2	4	0	0	0	1	12
DESERVE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BELONG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

There are 3 904 occurrences of possible progressives of the 12 verbs in the TMC altogether. Since the material is much smaller than in the COCA it is possible to check all the occurrences manually.

All the occurrences in context (in a full sentence) were printed out and manually checked for genuine progressiveness. Among the occurrences there were a couple of duplicates. When they were genuine progressives they were counted as separate occurrences. Non-progressive occurrences were excluded. When the occurrences were analysed, they were also classified according to which decade they appeared in.

Since all the occurrences of possible progressives are thoroughly checked, it is easy to calculate the frequency per million words within each decade. This also makes it possible to make an accurate and complete comparison of the frequency across time. The same procedure is done as in the COCA and the findings are that most occurrences are genuine progressives and some few are not. Table 16 shows the distribution of possible progressives and genuine progressives across time, *Pos prog* are possible progressives and *Gen prog* are genuine progressive. The non-genuine progressives are in the column between. The table has been split in two, because of its size. However, it gives a full overview of progressiveness across time of the verbs of the study.

Table 16 a). Possible, non-genuine and genuine progressives across decades in the TMC.

	1920s			1930s			1940s			1950s			1960s		
	Pos prog		Gen prog	Pos prog		Gen prog	Pos prog		Gen prog	Pos prog		Gen prog	Pos prog		Gen prog
FEEL	25	1	24	52	2	50	115	5	110	102	5	97	101	5	96
HEAR	12	1	11	29	1	28	44	2	42	29	2	27	38	1	37
SEE	7	0	7	32	2	30	70	4	66	55	2	53	57	3	54
THINK	56	0	56	119	1	118	230	8	222	197	4	193	153	2	151
KNOW	1	0	1	3	3	0	2	2	0	1	0	1	4	4	0
FORGET	1	0	1	2	0	2	3	0	3	10	0	10	3	1	2
HOPE	14	3	11	29	0	29	51	2	49	75	2	73	62	1	61
INTEND	3	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	0	4	0	0	0
PREFER	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DEPEND	1	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	4	2	0	2	4	0	4
DESERVE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BELONG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 16 b). Possible, non-genuine and genuine progressives across time in the TMC.

	1970s			1980s			1990s			2000s			Total		
	Pos prog		Gen prog	Pos prog		Gen prog	Pos prog		Gen prog	Pos prog		Gen prog	Pos prog		Gen prog
FEEL	55	2	53	67	3	64	109	4	105	90	4	86	716	31	685
HEAR	44	6	38	37	0	37	57	5	52	49	2	47	339	20	319
SEE	66	3	63	99	4	95	122	5	117	108	3	105	616	26	590
THINK	141	1	140	118	0	118	233	4	229	171	4	167	1418	24	1 394
KNOW	6	0	6	8	7	1	9	6	3	9	7	2	43	29	14
FORGET	4	0	4	7	0	7	6	0	6	4	2	2	40	3	37
HOPE	92	2	90	103	1	102	160	10	150	120	6	114	706	27	679
INTEND	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	12	0	12
PREFER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
DEPEND	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	12	0	12
DESERVE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BELONG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The verbs with the highest number of non-genuine progressives are FEEL, KNOW, HOPE and SEE. When they appear as non-genuine progressives they are most often a noun phrase. These non-genuine occurrences are now weeded out of the study.

5.2 Frequency of genuine progressives across time

After completing the check for genuine progressiveness, a new list of the frequency of genuine progressives appears. These figures are studied further. A complete record of this can be seen in Table 17. Some verbs have a very low frequency; this applies to all verbs of category 3 and 4 except HOPE. These are verbs of attitude and state verbs. Also KNOW and FORGET have very few instances of genuine progressives in the TMC.

Table 17. All occurrences of genuine progressives in the TMC.

Category	Verb	Genuine progressives	Category	Verb	Genuine progressives
Verbs of inert perception	FEEL	685	Verbs of attitude	HOPE	679
	HEAR	319		INTEND	12
	SEE	590		PREFER	2
Verbs of inert cognition	THINK	1 394	State verbs	DEPEND	12
	KNOW	14		DESERVE	0
	FORGET	37		BELONG	0

To be able to compare the occurrences across time periods, the occurrences are measured against the number of words within each decade of the TMC. Frequency per million words is calculated and shown in Table 18. The size of each decade in the TMC in million words is: 7.6 (1920s), 12.7 (1930s), 15.5 (1940s), 16.8 (1950s), 16.1 (1960s), 13.6 (1970s), 11.4 (1980s), 9.7 (1990s), 6.4 (2000s).

Table 18. Frequency of genuine progressives across time, per million words in the TMC.

Verb	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
FEEL	3	4	7	6	6	4	6	11	13
HEAR	1	2	3	2	2	3	3	5	7
SEE	1	2	4	3	3	5	8	12	16
THINK	7	9	14	11	9	10	11	24	26
KNOW	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FORGET	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
HOPE	1	2	3	4	4	7	9	15	18
INTEND	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PREFER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DEPEND	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DESERVE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BELONG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 18 reveals that the progressives are increasing in frequency across decades. This applies to the genuine progressives of FEEL, HEAR, SEE, THINK and HOPE. The change of frequency across decades is illustrated in Figure 3. This diagram illustrates the 5 most frequent genuine progressives in the TMC.

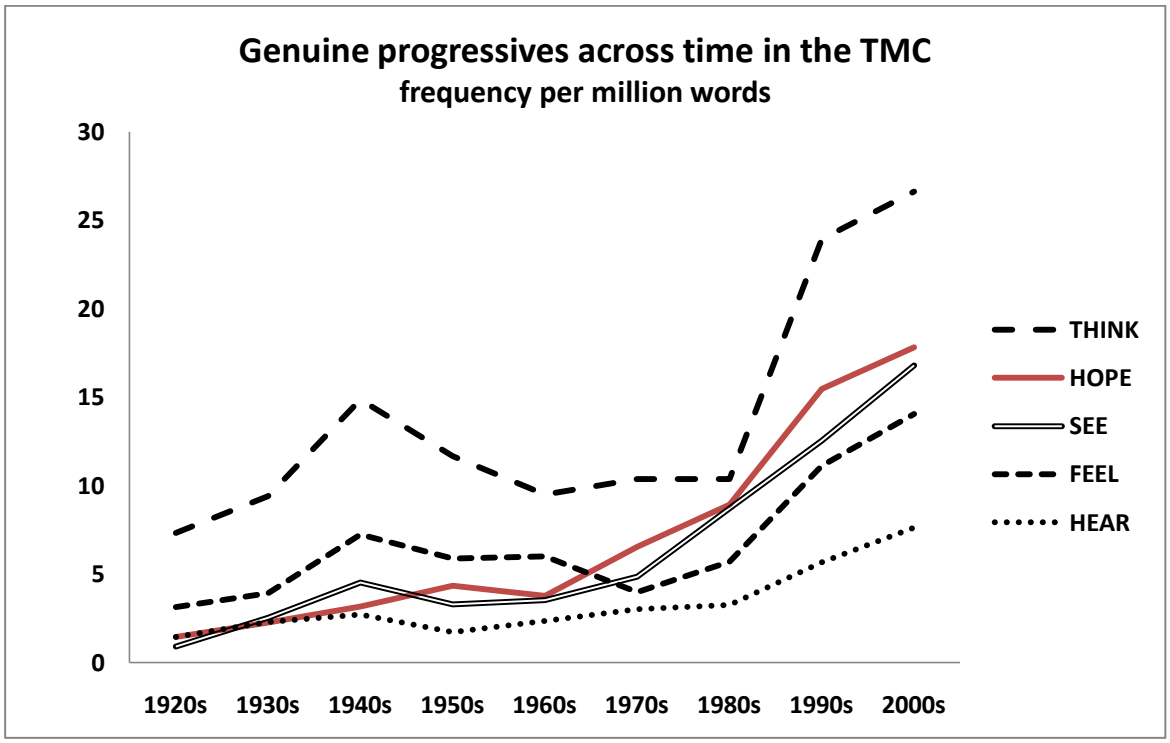


Figure 3. The most frequent genuine progressives across time in the TMC.

From Table 18 and Figure 3 an increasing frequency over the decades can be observed for some of the genuine progressives. There is a noticeable bump or an increase around the 1940s. This hump is most noticeable for THINK and FEEL and has a peak in the early 1940s and decreases into the 1950s. There seems to be a tolerance for more progressives of a limited period of time, which creates this increase of progressives. Likewise, Figure 3 illustrates an increasing frequency which is particularly notable in the last two decades. This applies to all 5 progressives of Figure 3.

THINK as a genuine progressive has the highest frequency of the last two decades with 24 and 26 occurrences per million words. HOPE also has a relatively high rise of frequency. HOPE starts with 1 occurrence in the 1920s and ends with 15 and 18 occurrences the last two decades. A similar pattern can be observed for HEAR, FEEL and SEE.

A separate diagram of THINK (Figure 4) as a genuine progressive shows more specifically the change of frequency and the increasing development of the last two decades of this progressive.

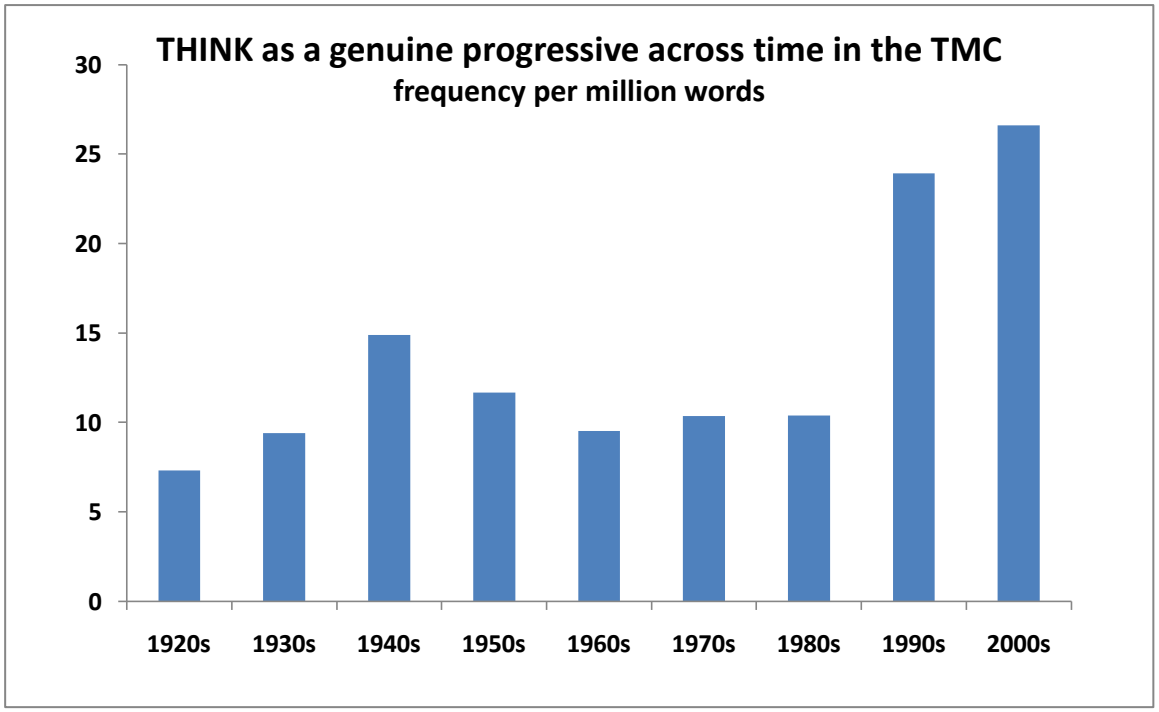


Figure 4. THINK as a genuine progressive across time in the TMC.

This bar chart shows the change of the frequency of THINK as a genuine progressive. The bump can be seen in the 1940s and also the steep increase of the frequency of the last two decades can be observed.

From Table 18 and Figure 3 and 4, an increasing use of progressives can be observed across decades in magazine language of the TMC. This applies to FEEL, HEAR, SEE, THINK and HOPE. Frequencies of progressives of the other verbs are marginal or non-existing per million words. The frequency of these five verbs also correlates very well with findings in the COCA. It is the same verbs that have the highest frequency per million words in both corpora.

Another thing to notice is that when the frequency of THINK as a genuine progressive in the COCA is contrasted with occurrences in the TMC there is a very similar pattern. Magazine language in the COCA can be compared to magazine language in the TMC. There is a correlation of frequency of the last two decades. THINK as a genuine progressive in the TMC has a frequency per million words of 24 and 26 in the 1990s and the 2000s. Magazine language in the COCA has a frequency of 25 occurrences per million words, for the time span from 1990 to 2009.

5.3 Comments and examples of genuine progressives in context

Some of the progressives with a high or unusual frequency are commented on further.

THINK, 1 394 occurrences of genuine progressives

THINK is the progressive with most occurrences in the TMC and after checking all occurrences for genuine progressiveness it turns out that 98%[7] of the occurrences are genuine. Here are some examples from the TMC where *thinking* is classified a genuine progressive.

1944/08/07	TMC	I have **been thinking** about that for a long time. The progressive *thinking* describes the mental process of considering something. There is a temporal frame related to *a long time*.
1994/10/24	TMC	Heavy ammunition loads and the presence of extensive supplies convinced officials that Sadam **was thinking** of invading Kuwait. *Thinking* in this connection means to be planning to do something in the future.

FEEL, 685 occurrences of genuine progressives

The genuine progressive of FEEL is usually related to a bodily or a mental sensation of experiencing something good or bad. The TMC shows examples of *feeling fine, satisfied, good, better, badly, pain, angry, wonderful, upset, blessed* and many more.

Also a more abstract concept of *feeling* can be observed in the samples of the TMC; *The market **is feeling** the pinch of the financial crisis* and *Stores **are feeling** the competition.* Here are some examples of FEEL in context used as a genuine progressive.

1979/10/12	TMC	Ford Motor Co too **is feeling** the pinch with sales of its big Thunderbirds down 41% for the year so far. In this context *is feeling* means that Ford Motor Co is experiencing a decrease in sales.

[7] 1394/1418*100%=98% (These numbers are from Table 16, pp.30-31).

1992/08/12	TMC	"This is the purest way to see what people out there **are feeling** about TV", Pearlman says. The progressive *are feeling* in this context signifies *having an opinion of* something, in this case TV. In this sample FEEL is not a verb of perception, but a verb of cognition.[8]
1995/08/20	TMC	See if Richard, who has stayed home "sick" from school, **is feeling** any better. This occurrence of *is feeling* is related to a bodily sensation of feeling good or bad.

Leech says that the verb FEEL can variably be progressive or not related to the meaning (Leech 2004:27-28). When one wants to express inert perception, the experience of something that simply happens, then the simple verb form is correct. He gives this example *I can feel the heat here*. However, when one wants to express active perception and specific attention on a subject, like in this sentence *I am feeling the ground with my foot,* then the progressive aspect is suitable.

Moreover he points out that FEEL can be a verb that can occur either with or without the progressives when it is referring to a temporary state. He says that there is a choice, without any apparent change of meaning, between *I feel great* and *I'm feeling great*.

HOPE, 679 occurrences of genuine progressives

HOPE usually has the meaning of wishing for something to happen in the future. The progressive form *hoping* is often used together with the preposition *for*. Progressive *hoping* can also imply tentativeness and politeness. Here are some examples of HOPE as a genuine progressive found in the TMC.

1950/02/20	TMC	I **am hoping** for the best and preparing for the worst. I *am hoping* in this context suggests tentativeness.

[8] See Leech (2004) for more about verb categories pp.23-27.

2008/14/18	TMC	I **am hoping** you can tell me where it is. In this case of *I am hoping* there is an element of politeness.

Leech has further notes about the use of the progressive *hoping* instead of the simple present of HOPE (Leech 2004:30). He says that 'the progressive is associated with susceptibility to change and in the present context, it is only a small step further to associate the progressive with lack of commitment or confidence in what will happen.' *I hope you will give us some advice* leaves the addressee little room for polite refusal, but *I am hoping you will give us some advice*, adds a more pessimistic tone. It implies that the speaker has not made a final commitment to the expectation, there is still room for a change of mind should the listener's reaction be discouraging

Mair and Hundt also comment on the verb HOPE and its progressive use. They point out that it is a verb of both cognition and emotion that unpredictably occur in both the simple and the progressive form (Mair & Hundt 1995:229). They also found in their investigation from 1960 to 1990 that the progressive of the verb has expanded considerably. Their findings are from both American and British English corpora.

SEE, 590 occurrences of genuine progressives

The progressive of SEE has many different semantic interpretations**.** *Seeing* may be the actual action of looking at someone with your eyes. It can also indicate to direct your attention at something or somebody, it might signify to understand or comprehend or to have regular appointments with somebody, e.g. your doctor. Here is a survey of progressive usage of SEE from the TMC holding different meanings.

1973/08/05	TMC	And grateful French politicians of the left **were seeing** to it that he got his money's worth. This means that politicians ensured that he got what he was paying for.

1979/09/24	TMC	We just can't believe what we **are seeing.** In this context *seein*g signifies the action of looking at something.
1996/09/09	TMC	A young woman hears that her beau **is seeing** other women. *Seeing* in this context means that her boyfriend is having appointments or affairs with other women.
1998/11/16	TMC	Vadim Filimonov, a 67 year-old former law professor, is the head of the commission of the Duma that **is seeing** whether grounds exist to launch an impeachment process against Boris Yeltsin. The Duma is evaluating or investigating if an impeachment process should be raised against Yeltsin.
2000/01/17	TMC	In 1998 Turner revealed that the two of them **were seeing** a marriage counselor. This means that they had regular appointments with a marriage counsellor.
2001/10/29	TMC	After selling 500 million PCs over the past 20 years, the computer industry **is seeing** sales decline for the first time ever. The computer industry is facing or experiencing a decline in sales.

Leech comments on SEE and *seeing* by suggesting that when one wants to use the progressive the verb *look at* indicates more activity and action and should be the first choice when one wants to express this (Leech 2004:28).

Comrie also has an observation of the verb SEE which he also refers to as a static verb.
He says it is possible to use a progressive form like *I have only had six whiskies and already I am seeing pink elephants* (Comrie 1976:38). This use of *seeing* elephants denotes a more imaginary situation and more emotions are added by using the progressive form of a verb. It seems like the progressive aspect for some verbs functions like an intensifier of emotions.

Shopf (1974) referred to by Mair and Hundt also mentions this *affective - emotional* use of the progressive. He says once there is an inflationary use of this, the simple present will cease to be the tense customarily used to express habitual action (Mair & Hundt 1995:118).

HEAR, 319 occurrences of genuine progressives

HEAR as a progressive is found in context in the TMC. From the random samples studied *hearing* usually means the activity of listening to music, sounds, somebody singing or people talking. HEAR as a progressive may also indicate the action of somebody getting in touch with you.

When *hearing* is not a genuine progressive it is most often a noun phrase referring to the sense of hearing, e.g. *He has lost his hearing.* In other cases the noun phase is referring to a public or political hearing where something is investigated. Here are some examples of *hearing* as a genuine progressive from the TMC.

1950/08/28	TMC	Why, I have **been hearing** from people I haven't seen in years. This means that *I have been contacted* by people I have not seen in years.
1972/12/25	TMC	He has **been hearing** music elsewhere in Boston as well. *Hearing* in this context refers to the activity of listening to music.

Leech talks about the difference between HEAR and LISTEN. He points out that LISTEN is a more active verb and thus is more appropriate in the progressive aspect (Leech 2004:28). He gives one example of a construction with lack of agency *I can't hear what he is saying*, where the simple verb form is the common choice. To rephrase this sentence in a more agentive register, it will be like this, *You are not listening to what he is saying.*

FORGET, 37 occurrences of genuine progressives

FORGET means the mental process of forgetting, that something you should remember slips your mind. Here are two examples of genuine progressives of FORGET from the TMC.

1944/11/01	TMC	You know I'**m forgettin**g how he looks and how he talks.
1998/08/	TMC	He **was forgetting**, perhaps, William Howard Taft, who ate more of everything than anybody else.

Leech argues that progressives of FORGET may be used to express special polite consideration. He says that 'in idiomatic colloquial speech this apparently uncountable usage is often preferred to the regular simple present. One reason for this preference seems to be that the progressive is a more tentative, and hence a more polite method of expressing a mental attitude' (Leech 2004:29). In particular the last example show tentativeness when *perhaps* is added at the same time.

5.4 Contrasting the progressive aspect and the simple verb form

The frequency of the simple verb form and the genuine progressive form in the TMC are contrasted in Table 19 and 20. In this calculation the frequency of the simple verb form consists of both the present and the past forms. The search strings [vvo], [vvz] and [vvd] are applied to find the raw frequencies of the simple verb forms. The frequencies of genuine progressives are given in Table 16 a) and b). They also consist of present and past occurrences.

Table 19 shows how the ratio is calculated for the verb FEEL. First the frequencies of the simple verb forms are retrieved from the TMC and added up. The frequencies of the genuine progressives are then measured against the total frequencies of the simple verb forms.

Table 19. Frequencies of the simple tense (present and past) contrasted against frequencies of the genuine progressive (present and past) of FEEL across time in the TMC.

FEEL	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
[vvo]	401	655	879	1 122	1 386	1 375	1 007	1 014	883
[vvz]	152	282	415	695	881	682	471	447	365
[vvd]	597	1 211	1 763	1 735	1 556	1 407	1 089	934	783
Sum	1 150	2 148	3 057	3 552	3 823	3 464	2 567	2 395	2 031
Gen prog	24	50	110	97	96	53	64	105	86
Ratio	2%	2%	4%	3%	3%	2%	2%	4%	4%

Table 20. Contrasting frequencies of the genuine progressive against frequencies of the simple verb form across time in the TMC.

	Ratio between frequencies of the genuine progressive and the simple verb form (present and past) across time in the TMC								
	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
FEEL	2%	2%	4%	3%	3%	2%	2%	4%	4%
HEAR	1%	2%	2%	1%	3%	4%	4%	7%	8%
SEE	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%	3%	4%
THINK	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	5%	4%
KNOW	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
FORGET	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%
HOPE	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	6%	6%	11%	13%
INTEND	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
PREFER	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
DEPEND	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
DESERVE	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
BELONG	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

FEEL, HEAR, SEE, THINK and HOPE have an increasing ratio across decades. The ratio is increasing in particular the last decades for HOPE, HEAR and THINK. HOPE is the verb with the highest ratio of 13% in the last decade. HOPE was also the verb that had the highest ratio in the COCA. Here, though the ratio was measured for present and past separately. The verbs of category 1 and 2 have some frequency, however, a relative low ratio. The verbs of category 3 and 4, except HOPE have a ratio of 1% or less. This shows that progressive constructions of these verbs are much less frequent than the simple verb form.

6 Conclusion

One should always view the results generated by a corpus investigation with a degree of caution. This study has looked into progressive use of 12 so-called anti-progressive verbs and found that there are progressive occurrences of them in the two American corpora examined, the COCA and the TMC. Some had a relatively high frequency; others had very few or no progressive occurrences. The study also revealed that there are differences of frequency of the progressives according to the genres in which they appear. Also when development across time is investigated, there is an increasing use of progressives in recent decades.

When the COCA is investigated thoroughly, the corpus reveals that the progressives are most frequently used in the genres of spoken and fiction. The findings disclose that news and magazine language also have occurrences of progressives of these verbs; however, the progressive is less frequent in these genres. Why these progressives appear particularly in the spoken language may be because this genre is freer and more uncensored compared to e.g. the academic genre. Spoken language is often spontaneous with less regard to contextual constraints and grammar and generally held to be more innovative than the written language. Fiction is the genre next to spoken in frequency of the progressives and these two genres are somewhat related as fiction also contains dialogue and quoted language which represent spoken language. Academic language holds the lowest frequency of progressives. This applies to all the 12 verbs of this study. This genre probably contains the most traditional language and there may be elements of formality, level of education, cultural background and conservatism that keep this language less tolerant to the use of so-called anti-progressive verbs in the progressive form. The most frequent progressives are THINK, SEE, FEEL, HOPE and HEAR in order of decreasing sequences. Moreover, THINK as a progressive stands out as the verb with the largest number of occurrences. This applies to both corpora.

The TMC reveals an increasing frequency of progressives of the verbs of the investigation in recent decades. This rise is quite distinct for some of the verbs, especially for the last two decades. There is also a notable hump of frequency around the 1940s. At that time a marked rise of frequency appeared for some of the progressives, however within a decade they fall back. What can be the explanation of this?

There might have been an alteration in magazine language at the time, which can be related to world happenings like WWII or to other social or cultural changes that could have put less constraint on grammar and allowing for more use of the progressive form. Nevertheless occurrences of these verbs in the progressive form return to a more conventional level in the following decades. An even more striking increase of progressive usage starts in the 1980s and intensifies in the next two decades in the TMC. This increase of progressives applies to the same verbs as in the COCA; THINK, SEE, FEEL, HOPE and HEAR. They show a noticeable boost of frequency in recent decades. Some of them increased in frequency by several hundred percent (per million words).

However, the enthusiasm that these results may generate needs to be dampened. Frequencies of genuine progressives were contrasted with frequencies of the simple verb form. This examination reveals a marginal ratio for most of the verbs of this investigation. HOPE stands out with the highest ratio in both corpora. HEAR and THINK also show a notable ratio, but lower than 10% in all genres and decades. This indicates that the simple verb form is definitely the most common choice for these verbs.

This investigation in many ways supports other studies that claim that the progressive is becoming more common in usage. This study even finds notable occurrences of progressives of verbs that are not supposed to be used in the progressive. That some of the verbs like THINK and SEE appear in the progressive form is not that surprising. They have a straight forward meaning and are commonly used in the progressive form.

In this study, a lot of effort was put into the task of extracting occurrences from the corpora and weeding out non-genuine progressives. This manual check was done carefully and precisely; however, there is always a margin of error when doing this.

Another thing noticed is that even though the number of occurrences of genuine progressives was slightly reduced through this analysis of genuine progressiveness, it did not change the numbers much. The investigation could have been conducted with the findings of the initial progressives generated by the corpora. The final outcome would have been more or less the same. This is related to the fact that extracting a few non-genuine occurrences for each auxiliary combination has little impact when occurrences are measured against frequency per million words.

Only KNOW had a significant number of non-genuine progressives that were excluded from the investigation. For this verb, the outcome would have been different if the recorded forms or what this study refers to as possible progressives had been used.

American English was the only subject of the investigation and this may be important to bear in mind when one tries to explain the results. Tottie [9]claims that the progressive is much more common in American English, especially in conversation, than in British English. Consequently, conducting the same investigation into British English might have given another outcome. This may also be the case for other varieties of English.

Objections to the findings can also be related to the choice of corpora. The smaller and more specialized they are, the less general are the tendencies which can be drawn from the results. As the largest corpus, the COCA is the most representative of American English as a whole as it generates occurrences from a wide range of sources. The TMC holds a more limited collection of magazine language only; nevertheless, the time sectioning makes this corpus particularly interesting and suitable for a diachronic investigation of change and development across time.

A further objection may be related to the language of articles appearing in *Time Magazine*. Is the language really representative of English as it is used in the USA? The language of *Time Magazine* is looked upon as creative in its linguistic style.[10] To what extent this may influence the findings of progressives is, however, doubtful. In my view, *Time Magazine* is just as representative as any other American magazine, and the TMC is well suited for this analysis. Magazine language can be suitable for observing language change, since it reflects the language of the media and it has a considerable impact.

This change of frequency of the progressive may also be influenced by other varieties of English. In Indian English there is a strong tendency to use the progressive aspect of stative verbs. In India they will say, *I am understanding it* or *She is knowing the answer.* Also, *I am working at the University* instead of *I work at the University*. This is an influence of traditional Hindi grammar which is adapted by users of Indian English (Wikipedia on Indian English). It is not unlikely that this more exclusive use of progressives from one variety of English can have an impact on the use of progressives in another.

[9] See Tottie (2002) for further discussion of differences between American and British English.
[10] See Yates (1981) for more about the vocabulary of Time Magazine.

Language itself is not static; globalization has come and can have an even stronger impact on the development of the progressive of English in the future.

Many linguists have tried to explain the increasing use of the progressive aspect. Some would say that the growing use of the progressive is due to a less formal language, a trend referred to as colloquialization, where the spoken language influences the written. Thormodsæter says that the progressive verb form adds a new layer of meaning to the situation, and that such a process is an essential part of language change, 'if a new form is to be grammaticalized or lexicalized, the new form needs to add something which the current form does not express' (Thormodsæter 2006:69). Also other linguists have pointed out that this tolerance for more progressive use is due to the desire to express feelings and nuances, tentativeness and politeness.

Moreover, Comrie suggests that there is a change towards a more extended use of progressivity in English. He thinks that 'English is developing from a restricted use of the progressive, always with progressive meaning to this more extended meaning range and that the present anomalies are representing a midway stage between these two points' (Comrie 1976:39).

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Corpora examined

The Corpus of Contemporary American English (the COCA)

http://www.americancorpus.org

The Time Magazine Corpus (the TMC)

http://corpus.byu.edu/time/